



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**Office of the Secretary**  
**Office of Wildland Fire Coordination**  
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**Washington, D.C. 20240**

Memorandum

March 15, 2006

To: Bureau Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Bureau Director, Bureau of Land Management  
Bureau Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau Director, National Park Service

From: Tom Frey, Acting Director, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination

Subject: FY 2006 Rural Fire Assistance Program Guidance

This memorandum provides guidance to DOI bureaus for implementation of the FY 2006 Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) program. This administrative plan is the result of a collaborative process among the DOI fire bureaus, the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), and the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC) and consultation with USDA Forest Service representatives. Overall Program Administrative Plan guidance is attached.

Generally, administrative processes for the 2006 RFA program will be similar to those in the past, but with a few key differences. Bureau allocation of RFA funds will be determined through national office review of funding requests submitted from each State, State Compact or equivalent, or region (all further referenced as State). States may join together to submit regional requests, though. Funding requests are to be reviewed jointly by the DOI bureaus and NASF representative in each State, and prioritized through the customary State-level collaborative interagency process used for RFA in past years.

The RFA program funding priorities for this year are, in order: 1) Wildland fire training; 2) Essential personal protective equipment (e.g., new generation fire shelters, wildland Nomex shirts and trousers); and, 3) Communications equipment (P-125 compliant hand-held radios, mobile units for ground vehicles).

## Administrative Timeline

The timeline for each segment is summarized in the following table.

**2006 RURAL FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
15	15 16 30	1 5 6				30
GRANTS OPEN		STATES PRIORITIZE	NIFC REVIEW	AGENCY DISTRIBUTION AND OBLIGATION		

The open period for RFA funding application begins on March 15, 2006 and closes April 15, 2006. States are to meet, review applications, and collaboratively review and prioritize DOI RFA funding requests in accordance with the guidelines provided in this memo. The RFA program will be posted on <http://www.grants.gov>. Consequently, States that have already held their open periods for RFA applications are obligated to accept and consider any additional applications received through April 15, 2006.

## Administrative Procedures at the State Level

- States may use established procedures for the collection of applications. Applicants with established cooperative agreements are to submit applications to the agency / office contact used previously. New applicants should contact the appropriate DOI RFA bureau contact for their State, listed in the attachment, or their local State Forester or equivalent, for additional assistance. Applicants may also find RFA program information on <http://www.grants.gov>.
- DOI, State and local cooperators who are not applying for a grant will meet within each State to review RFA applications through a joint collaborative process. Most States have an established application review and ranking process. Some established procedures and timelines may require modification to implement the 2006 RFA program, but the collaborative process to prioritize requests remains the same.
- For purposes of planning and prioritizing the amount to request, each State will use the dollar figure listed in the DOI RFA Budget Planning Guideline attachment. **This amount represents the total DOI, not individual bureau, funding amount and is a general guideline. No State is guaranteed the same amount received in previous years.**
- The State Forester or equivalent must review and concur with the requests and prioritizations proposed by the interagency group.
- DOI bureaus and cooperators will establish one combined, prioritized list of DOI RFA requests for each State. The bureau that would logically distribute the grant funds to a particular applicant will be designated as the awarding bureau. This will need to be identified on the prioritized submittal.
- States are to use all required fields in the attached Prioritization Template to ensure consistency in reply format.
- Use application forms previously used to apply for RFA grants. A revised form may be issued next year.

## **Administrative Procedures at the National Level**

- Funds will be allocated to the individual bureaus based on the outcome of the interagency prioritization process, with the National review using the FY 2005 allocations as a planning and prioritizing guide only.
- Based on prioritizations determined at the State level, a bureau within a State may receive more or less funding than it received in FY 2005. Adjustments to total State funding amounts may occur. Such adjustments will be determined by the overall submitted priorities, and with careful consideration in meeting Department-wide national priorities for the RFA program.
- Assessment and final determination of allocations per State will be made by the DOI in coordination with NASF and consultation with the USFS and other partners.

## **Additional Considerations**

The delay in the release of funds and accompanying 2006 program guidance is recognized.

- Prompt obligation of funds is encouraged in accordance with local schedules determined by unit budget offices, as coordinated by national budget staff.
- Training using FY 2006 funds can be counted toward FY 2007 accomplishments with no penalty, as it is acknowledged most training paid for with FY 2006 funds will be scheduled in FY 2007.
- Each bureau is to input RFA requests and awards into NFPORS promptly to provide for accurate real-time program accomplishment tracking.

It is critical that local DOI representatives provide information on revised program priorities, administrative schedules, and other pertinent information to local RFDs, State representatives and other cooperators.

Requests for RFA awards have always exceeded available funds, so not all applicants will receive grants. To help meet additional needs of RFDs, DOI representatives are encouraged to distribute information regarding other fire service grant programs and, as needed, assist RFD's with other program application processes. Additional available fire service grants include State-sponsored grants, the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA), and the Assistance to Firefighters grant program, administered by the Preparedness Directorate's Office of Grants and Training, Department of Homeland Security, in cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration. Information on these programs is found in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance ([www.cfda.gov](http://www.cfda.gov)).

## **Contact Information**

Submit prioritized State lists electronically, in the format provided, to [Rural\\_Fire\\_Assistance@nifc.blm.gov](mailto:Rural_Fire_Assistance@nifc.blm.gov) no later than close of business April 30, 2006. Program inquiries or requests may also be directed to this address, or to appropriate individual bureau RFA bureau contacts listed in the attachment.

Cc: Fire Directors (BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS)

Attachments:

RFA Program Administrative Plan

RFA Bureau Contacts

DOI RFA Budget Planning Guideline

Prioritization Template

Department of the Interior  
Rural Fire Assistance Program  
Administrative Plan

**Purpose**

The Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) program funds are appropriated by Congress annually. RFA is intended to increase local firefighter safety and enhance the fire protection capabilities of Rural Fire Departments (RFD) by helping RFDs meet accepted standards of wildland fire qualifications, training, and performance for initial and extended attack at the local level. The RFA program supports the overall goals of the National Fire Plan by improving the capacity and capability of local fire departments to protect their communities from the effects of wildland fire.

The RFA program provides funds for RFDs that:

- Protect rural, wildland-urban interface communities,
- Play a substantial cooperative role in the protection of federal lands,
- Are cooperators with the Department of the Interior (DOI) managed lands through cooperative agreements with the DOI or their respective State, and,
- Serve communities with a population of 10,000 or less.

**Authority**

Activities in this program are derived from the FY 2001 Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, PL 106-291. FY 2001 was the first time the Congress appropriated funds for RFA grants.

**Program Administration**

- Program priorities and criteria may change with each fiscal year at the discretion of the Secretary.
- The maximum allowable award to each RFD is \$20,000 annually.
- The RFA grant administrative timeline will be determined annually by the DOI bureaus in coordination with OWFC and, to the greatest extent possible, coordinated with the application and review periods established for other federal fire service grant programs.
- Grant announcements will be consistent with applicable sections of Public Law 106-107 (Federal Financial Assistance Management Act of 1999) and Office of Management and Budget policy and guidance.

- Within each State, State compact, region, zone or equivalent, DOI RFA representatives, State Foresters or equivalent, and appropriate partners will review applications, and submit a single prioritized list of RFA grant applicants.
- National DOI RFA leads, in collaboration with partners, will review submissions, and allocate funds to bureaus based on priorities determined by the Secretary and in coordination with partners, cooperating organizations and appropriate stakeholders.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

An RFA/RFD **MUST** meet **ALL** of the requirements below to be considered for DOI RFA grant funding.

- The RFD must be party to an agreement with the State Forester (or equivalent) or Tribe, or a cooperative fire agreement with a DOI bureau (BIA, BLM, NPS, USFWS).
- The RFD must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number required for all federal grant applicants. The DUNS number is a unique nine-character identification number available free of charge from Dun & Bradstreet, Inc.
- The RFD serves a community of a population of 10,000 or less, and is in the vicinity of or within the wildland/urban interface.
- The RFD must be in close proximity to DOI lands and communities within the wildland urban interface.
- A local DOI bureau must be dependent on RFD for response to wildfire incidents.
- Other appropriate local or regional criteria.
- The RFD must demonstrate the capability to meet cost share requirements which may include in-kind services. Cooperator contribution may exceed, but not amount to less than 10 percent of the amount awarded. Examples of in-kind services may include, but are not limited to, facility use incurred by an RFD for hosting training courses; travel and per diem costs incurred by an RFD to attend training courses; and administration costs related to purchasing RFA equipment and supplies. **Funding or in-kind resources may not be derived from other federal funding programs.**
- Allowable funding requests are limited, based on annual Secretarial direction, and may include training, personal protection equipment, and programs that are supported by a larger plan (e.g., CWPP, FMP, Local Response Plan) and equipment.

- Funding priorities for grant awards may shift from year to year.
- Local and regional workgroups must use available systems and networks to ensure funding requests are not duplicated by another federal bureau, agency or Tribe.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Evaluator(s) must utilize general criteria to rank eligible Rural Fire Departments for funding.

- To ensure consistency and compatibility with existing fire service assistance programs, the DOI bureaus, Tribes and State Foresters (or equivalent) will coordinate to cooperatively establish priority ranking of RFA applicants.
- The workgroup must verify each RFD's level of significance (LOS). Factors to be considered in this assessment include:
  - The RFD's proximity to DOI managed lands and protection role for the Wildland/Urban Interface,
  - DOI reliance on the RFD for expedient initial attack in remote DOI areas of responsibility. RFDs in close vicinity to DOI lands may play a major role in initial attack due to their close vicinity, and have a moderate or high level of significance to the DOI,
  - Other local or regional criteria, disclosed in advance to grant applicants.
- State Foresters (or equivalent) must concur with prioritization of funding requests.
- Favorable consideration should be directed to those RFDs that are in compliance with DOI and State regulations; have promptly expended previous funds awarded; comply with monitoring and reporting requirements in timely fashion; and, have been consistent with honoring cost-share commitments.
- The workgroup should evaluate the RFD's relationship in supporting initiatives, direction plans such as the *10-year Comprehensive Strategy* and its *Implementation Plan*, State fire plans, community wildfire protection plans or equivalent(s), and fire management plans.

### **Reporting of Annual Program Accomplishments**

- The DOI bureaus will utilize the National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) to enter and store RFA program data.
- All program requests and awards will be consolidated only from NFPORS data. Each bureau is responsible for entering data into the NFPORS database. OWFC will establish time frames for fiscal year requests and quarterly accomplishments.

### **RFA Program Monitoring and Accountability**

- Grants and agreements will be administered in accordance with applicable sections of CFR 43.12.
- Federal Financial System (FFS) or equivalent financial system may be used for further program obligation review and verification.

## RFA Bureau Contacts

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**2006 DOI RFA BUDGET PLANNING GUIDELINE**

dollars in thousands

State	\$000
AK	\$34
AL	\$0
AR	\$118
AZ	\$673
CA	\$939
CO	\$482
CT	\$0
DC	\$0
DE	\$0
FL	\$88
GA	\$52
HI	\$20
GUAM	\$20
IA	\$28
ID	\$683
IL	\$32
IN	\$23
KS	\$69
KY	\$98
LA	\$0
MA	\$62
MD	\$12
ME	\$50
MI	\$59
MN	\$268
MO	\$53
MS	\$14

State	\$000
MT	\$978
NC	\$109
ND	\$116
NE	\$63
NH	\$4
NJ	\$30
NM	\$523
NV	\$691
NY	\$29
OH	\$13
OK	\$232
OR	\$766
PA	\$46
PR	\$33
RI	\$8
SC	\$56
SD	\$224
TN	\$131
TX	\$219
UT	\$763
VA	\$47
VI	\$24
VT	\$14
WA	\$115
WI	\$188
WV	\$80
WY	\$579

**Grand Total** **\$9,958**

**Prioritization Template Instructions**

Data from this Template will be used to populate the NFPORS database. Column headings correspond to NFPORS fields. You may add additional rows if necessary, but do not change column headings or add/delete columns.

Column	Data Description/Instructions
A	<b>Region/State Name:</b> Enter Name of State.
B	<b>Partner Name:</b> Enter department/applicant name. List departments individually.
C	<b>Agency Name:</b> The DOI bureau designated / negotiated to fund the department, usually the bureau holding agreement
D	<b>Description of Proposed Projects / Items to be Funded:</b> Projects/ items are NWCG training, basic PPE and new generation fire shelters, and essential communications equipment. Provide adequate detail, using Comments section (H) as needed to provide additional information. The NFPORS equivalent is Category Name/Category Type.
E	<b>Priority Ranking:</b> Enter the priority ranking. Sort awards, highest priorities first, with lower priorities in descending order.
F	<b>Requested Amount:</b> Enter the funding amount proposed for the award. This is the amount proposed by the applicant.
G	<b>Awarded Amount:</b> To be entered at time awarded.
H	<b>Comments:</b> Use as necessary.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
2	<b>FY 2006 DOI RFA Funding Prioritization Template</b>							
3								
	<b>Region/State Name</b>	<b>Partner Name</b>	<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>Description of proposed project / items funded (Category Name/Category Type)</b>	<b>Priority Ranking</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Awarded Amount</b>	<b>Comments</b>
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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
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	<b>Region/State Name</b>	<b>Partner Name</b>	<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>Description of proposed project / items funded (Category Name/Category Type)</b>	<b>Priority Ranking</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Awarded Amount</b>	<b>Comments</b>
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